

# CARVED ENTRANCES OF MAORI SEMI-SUBTERRANEAN STOREHOUSES

ROGER NEICH

*Abstract.* Using four early nineteenth century field illustrations of rua tahuhu semi-subterranean storehouses with carved entrances from the Whanganui district, this study assembles new information on their architecture and artistic embellishment. On this basis, thirteen carvings in museum collections in New Zealand and Europe are identified as the entrances of this type of rua tahuhu. This corrects previous interpretations of these carvings as the entrances of raised pataka storehouses. Analysis of the localities of origin and the tribal associations of these carvings enables the new definition of a Whanganui/Taranaki regional type of rua tahuhu entrance which spans the major stylistic divide between western sinuous and eastern 'square' figure carvings. The stylistic relationships of these rua tahuhu carvings clarifies the range of tribal carving styles among Taranaki, Ngati Haua, Ngati Ruanui, Nga Rauru, Whanganui and Ngati Apa tribes. Symbolically, these carvings probably represent a local tribal ancestor rather than a more remote deified creator-ancestor. In contrast to this Whanganui/Taranaki regional type, three other different regional types of rua tahuhu entrance are now defined, namely an East Coast, an Eastern Bay of Plenty, and a North Auckland type.

In the general literature on Maori art and architecture, scarcely any attention has been paid to the carved doors and doorways of semi-subterranean storehouses. Of the earlier writers, only Best (1916:74, 76, 78) has assembled references which mention the rare occurrence of notched patterns on the maihi, a little carving on the lintel of the doorway, and a carved door. Later, mainly archaeological, writers on semi-subterranean storehouses have made very little use of Best's wider material on these constructions, and none have followed up on the question of carved or decorated entrances.

When Fox (1974; 1976:39-43) surveyed the evidence concerning prehistoric Maori storage pits, their doors and doorways were described only in terms of the remaining archaeological evidence in the form of earth buttresses, with no discussion of any possible timber constructions. Most recently, Davidson (1984:121-127) did not discuss the entrances of rectangular storage pits. This contrasts with the extensive and detailed discussion devoted by many writers to the doorway carvings of meeting houses and raised pataka storehouses.

This study seeks to redress this neglect by clarifying the status of semi-subterranean storehouse carved doors and doorways as a distinct category of artefact and architectural element. All the evidence of their form and architectural function to be gleaned from early illustrations is presented, all the known examples of such doors and doorways now held in museums are assembled and described, their stylistic and regional distribution is examined, and their possible symbolism explored. These doors and doorways are shown to constitute an important architectural and artistic component within the known range of Maori material culture. Their identification also adds considerably to the corpus of well-documented carvings required for the better detailed definition of regional and tribal carving styles, especially needed in the south Taranaki-Whanganui region.

When these types of carvings have been mentioned in the recent literature, most notably by Day (1982; 1983:137) and Simmons (1985:34-35, 89, 93, 96, 103), they have been

interpreted as either the door or the figure above the doorway of a raised pataka storehouse. In the course of a wider survey, this study re-examines the work of Day and Simmons on this subject and argues that virtually all of the carvings of this type described by them as pataka carvings are actually entrance carvings of semi-subterranean storehouses.

### SEMI-SUBTERRANEAN STOREHOUSES

As a distinct type of architectural construction, semi-subterranean foodstores are to be distinguished on the one hand from elevated storehouses known as pataka and whata raised on piles or high posts, and on the other hand from completely subterranean stores known as rua, cut either horizontally or vertically into the ground. Pataka and whata (where the latter term is applied to an elevated house rather than a simple platform) often display varying amounts of carving on their outer timbers, whereas rua entrances were generally left plain except for some rare examples.

The type of semi-subterranean stores which concern us here share some features of both pataka and rua, with some external carved embellishment but excavated partly into the ground, either on level ground or backed into a steep slope or bank. The floor level was excavated lower than the surrounding ground, the gabled front with the single central entrance was constructed out of shaped timbers, and a horizontal ridgepole supported the roof which sometimes abutted on to the sloping ground of the rear in the case of those built against a bank. Fox (1974) has described the various arrangements of posts supporting the ridgepole, ranging from a single row of posts to three or more postrows in a single pit-store. The main function of these semi-subterranean storehouses was the storage of kumara (Best 1925:118-9).

Elsdon Best (in Phillipps 1952:96-9) has recorded the following Maori terms of relevance to this type of semi-subterranean store:

- kopani - door or board closing entrance to a pit, store
- patengitengi (patengi) - storehouse for kumara or pit
- perepere - slab over door of a rua kai, inside jambs
- rua kai - food store pit
- rua kumara - kumara store pit
- rua koauau - kumara store pit
- rua pare - a storehouse made in the ground
- rua tahuhu - a roofed pit semi-subterranean store
- rua tatara - semi-subterranean pit store having rat-stopping appliance
- rua tuanui - synonymous with rua tahuhu
- rua tiriwa - store with an excavated floor

Judging from these terms, the type of store to be discussed in this study would probably be called a rua kumara and more specifically a rua tahuhu or a rua tuanui, where tahuhu and tuanui refer to a ridgepole and roof. However, it should be noted that Best (1916:95) maintains that the name rua tahuhu was applied only to large pit stores owned in common by several families, whereas smaller rua made for the use of one family were not called rua tahuhu. On the evidence to be presented here it is not possible to determine whether the storehouses involved were intended to serve one family or several. The possibility of regional differences in terminology must also be conceded.

The actual carved entrance element could then be called a kopani if it is the door closing the entrance, or a perepere if it functions as a slab above the actual doorway entrance. As will

be seen below, both kopani and perepere are relevant depending on the finer details of the specific function of each of these carvings.

In an extensive description of the construction of a rua tahuhu, Tuta Nihoniho of Ngati Porou (in Best 1916:93-5) used the term “perepere” for a board or plank with notched edge for ventilation against which the top of the door rested. Nihoniho stated that the perepere was sometimes carved with a kowhaiwhai pattern and extended right up to the ridgepole which it touched. He explained that the door, for which he does not give a Maori term, was composed of one or two planks sewn together. As a detached slab, this door was inserted into a groove at the bottom of the doorway and jammed in against the perepere at the top, being held in place by pegs. Nihoniho was describing an East Coast form of rua tahuhu in which the doorway construction apparently differed from the predominantly Whanganui/Taranaki form with the type of carved entrance to be described in this study. Nevertheless, his usage of the term “perepere” is helpful.

In a Ngati Ruanui/Taranaki “lament for a plantation” (Ngata and Hurinui 1970:177), the parts of a kumara store pit are personified thus; “the supporting pillar (pou), the stepping-over beam (paepae), the lid or trapdoor (kopani) and the cleared floor-space (papa-ahu)”. This gives some confidence that the term “kopani” is authentic usage for the door of roofed rectangular semi-subterranean storehouses and therefore perhaps for the door version of the type of carvings described here, at least in the Taranaki/Aotea canoe area. Williams’s Maori dictionary gives “kopani” as a door or lid specifically fitting into an opening but not sliding or turning on hinges. Such a sliding or turning door would be called a “tatau”.

Because of some doubts concerning regional terminological differences and differences in constructional details, the evidence for the exact applicability of the terms “perepere” and “kopani” to the carvings described here is not conclusive. However, no other terms are known and these at least are very specific to rua tahuhu (as opposed to “kuwaha” which is used very generally), and have some degree of authenticity. Therefore they will be used in this study with the above proviso. Hopefully, this study might elicit authentic Whanganui and Taranaki regional terminology for these structures.

## EARLY ILLUSTRATIONS OF CARVED RUA TAHUHU ENTRANCES

Fortunately, four early nineteenth century illustrations have been located showing various rua tahuhu with carved entrances in place. These illustrations provide the only available detailed evidence on how these carved elements fit into the total construction of the rua tahuhu. Ranging in date from the 1840s to the 1860s, these illustrations show a marked development of neatness in construction, perhaps reflecting the use of stone tools in the manufacture of the 1840s storehouse being replaced by metal tools and pit-sawn timber by the 1860s. The localities of these illustrations also provide additional evidence for the geographical distribution of this type of storehouse entrance. Each item is listed alphabetically to enable plotting on a distribution map (Fig. 1).

### A. Rua tahuhu at Putiki-wharanui Pa, Whanganui, 1841-1847

Fig. 2

This semi-subterranean storehouse was first drawn in pencil as part of a village scene entitled “Scraps from Putiki warre nui” by the Scottish artist John Alexander Gilfillan at some time between 1841 when he arrived in New Zealand and 1847 when he left for Australia. A wash version of this sketch by Gilfillan, dated 1840, was published by T.W. Downes in his



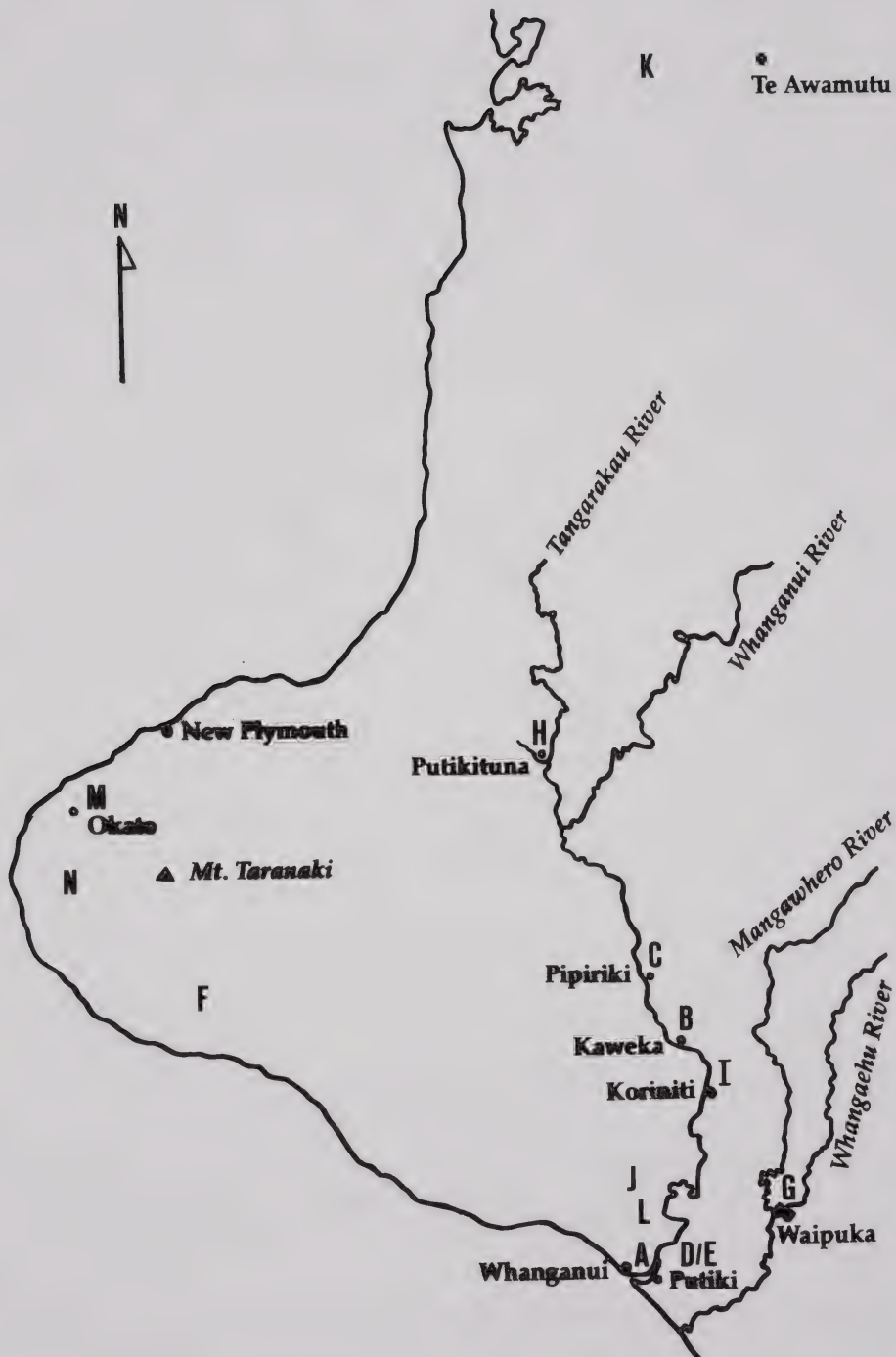


Fig. 1. Map of western areas of the North Island of New Zealand showing localities of rua tahuhu carved entrances described in the text, referenced alphabetically.



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Fig. 2. Rua tahuhu (A) at Putiki-Wharanui Pa, Whanganui, 1841-1847. Sketch by J.A. Gilfillan.  
Photo: Hocken Library, Dunedin G473.

book *Old Whanganui* (1915:8). The same semi-subterranean store appears again in a watercolour composite village scene, said to represent Putiki, painted later by Gilfillan in New Zealand (Bell 1992:64). Several colour lithograph reproductions of an oil painting based on this watercolour had wide circulation and the original watercolour dated 1847 has been recently acquired by the Sarjeant Art Gallery in Whanganui. Another composite scene derived from Gilfillan of the same village showing this same storehouse was published in 1849 by W. Tyrone Power under his own name (Power 1849:160). In a final version, Phillipps (1966:45) published a sketch of the rua tahuhu alone copied directly from Gilfillan's original sketch, as an example of a "kumara pit, Putiki pa, Whanganui".

Gilfillan's original sketch clearly shows a low storehouse front constructed of roughly-hewn vertical upright slabs, probably inserted below ground-level. These slabs are simply butted together with no battens over the joins. At the centre of this triangular front is a stylised frontal figure of indeterminate gender carved in high relief from one large timber slab with its head projecting to form the highest point of the apex. This carved slab surmounts a separate square uncarved door constructed of three vertical panels of timber, with its lower edge resting on the ground level. This door swings on what are clearly two large European hinges attached at top and bottom of the door. These two hinges have been transformed into a more traditional-looking single horizontal bar across the door in the otherwise very accurate copy published by Phillipps. The construction of the rest of this storehouse cannot be seen in Gilfillan's sketch, but it provides good detail of the construction of the front.

Another entrance carving from a rua tahuhu appears in Gilfillan's sketch, standing detached on the ground beside the woman on the left. Further away in the central background,

Gilfillan has included another rua tahuhu, but this one has a plain slab above the door. In a note written across the top of this sketch, Gilfillan comments that the carvings were “invariably” painted red.

On the clear evidence of Gilfillan’s sketch, the carved component of the semi-subterranean storehouse functions as an architectural member above the door and could therefore justifiably be called a perepere. On the carving itself, the details of the face and the general proportions seem to have been rendered authentically. Carved spirals are shown on the shoulders and hips, but unfortunately the placement of the hands is not clear. They are probably splayed across the chest.

### **B. Rua tahuhu at Kaweka (Ranana), Whanganui River, 1861**

Fig. 3

This rua tahuhu was sketched by James Coumts Crawford, an early Wellington settler and geologist, at Kaweka (also known as Ranana or London) on the Whanganui River, on 24 December 1861. Crawford was on his way up-river to inspect reported coal seams on the Tangarakau River and his party stopped at Kaweka only long enough to pay their respects to an elderly resident (Crawford 1880:100).

The quick pencil sketch in Crawford’s field sketchbook (E 47, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington) shows only the front of the rua tahuhu with no detail at ground level. As in the rua tahuhu sketched by Gilfillan (A), the Kaweka example has a front consisting of large vertical slabs of timber butted and tied together at their edges. The top edges of these slabs,

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Fig. 3. Rua tahuhu (B) at Kaweka (Ranana), Whanganui River, 1861. Sketch by J.C. Crawford.  
Photo: Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington 147455 1/2.

which could justifiably here be called epa, are cut much more neatly than the rough slabs of Gilfillan's rua tahuhu (A) but there are still apparently no maihi or bargeboards unless Crawford has seen only a detached front. In an unusual structural arrangement, the carved element of this rua tahuhu is placed between a short epa at each side with the three panels forming an insert resting above what appears to be a small low central uncarved door. If this is the case, then the carved element could again be called a perepere.

Crawford has devoted most of his artistic effort to show the detail of the carved figure. It is a frontal stylised figure of indeterminate gender with both hands on its stomach. In careful detail, Crawford has shown that the narrow stomach terminates at the top in a small profile manaia face just below the pendant protruding tongue.

### **C. Rua tahuhu at Pipiriki, Whanganui River, 1861**

Fig. 4

On the same Whanganui River journey described above, Crawford reached Pipiriki in the evening of 24 December 1861 and was delayed there several days by heavy rains. Maintaining his interest in food stores, he sketched another rua tahuhu at Pipiriki where he had the time and leisure to fill in more detail. However, neither his diary nor his published account of this trip make any mention of the foodstores encountered here or at Kaweka.

Crawford's fieldbook sketch shows the rua tahuhu (which he called a potato pit) set within its own small fenced enclosure. Again the front consists of vertical thick timber epa set

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Fig. 4. Rua tahuhu (C) at Pipiriki, Whanganui River, 1861. Sketch by J.C. Crawford. Photo: Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington 147460 1/2.



directly into the ground and forming a neat roof line but without any bargeboards. The low sides are probably made with similar slabs of timber or perhaps some other material. On the roof, Crawford has shown neat rows of shingles or perhaps bundles of rushes or some similar material tied together, without any projecting over the side as an eave.

On the large central slab of the front, a high relief frontal figure with no indicated sex, is carved with all of its head projecting above the roof line. The joins with the epa on both sides of this slab are covered by a batten lashed over at regular intervals. Below this carved slab is a separate low panel which appears to be much too low to form a doorway and is therefore probably a permanent sill or paepae to the entrance. If this is so, the carved panel is the door and can therefore be called a kopani.

#### **D. Rua tahuhu at Putiki Pa, Whanganui, 1860s**

Fig. 5

This photograph is included in an album, now in the Alexander Turnbull Library, of New Zealand photographs compiled by Ensign B.G. Haines of the 18th Royal Irish Regiment while on active duty during the New Zealand Wars. This regiment arrived in Auckland in 1863 and did not leave New Zealand until 1870, the last imperial corps to leave. Therefore, this photograph was probably taken sometime in the early to mid 1860s. The photographer was probably W.J. Harding (John Sullivan, Alexander Turnbull Library, pers. comm. 17 November 1989). Another photograph of the same scene obviously taken by the same photographer on the same occasion but with a Maori man in the foreground has been seen in a photograph album held privately in Whanganui.

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Fig. 5. Rua tahuhu (D) at Putiki Pa, Whanganui, 1860s. Photo: B.G. Haines Album, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

In this only known photograph of a carved entrance in place on a rua tahuhu, the same constructional details are seen as in the earlier sketches. Vertical timber panels form the front wall, with the central position taken by a high relief frontal carved figure whose shoulders meet the line of the roof. The joins between this central carved panel and flanking epa are covered by battens lashed in three places at intervals down each side. Below this carved panel is a square doorway, about 60 cm high and 55 cm wide, judging by the known dimensions of the carved panel above it. The doorway is outlined by a projecting flat plain timber lintel and a projecting plain jamb on the right side. The left side lacks this projecting jamb and seems to indicate that the plain flat timber door itself swings from here on some type of hinge. The lower edge of the door clearly terminates slightly above ground level, giving clearance for the door to swing open. This photograph therefore definitely confirms that in this case the carved component is functioning as a perepere.

### ENTRANCES OF RUA TAHUHU IN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

It is not always possible to determine whether these carvings actually served as the door (kopani) or the slab over the doorway (perepere) of rua tahuhu, but whichever is the case, they form a distinctive category of artefact. They can be characterised as an upright rectangular slab or panel of timber bearing a full-length frontal figure carved from the solid in high relief, with its head or part of its head projecting above the upper edge of the panel. The rear of the panel is usually flat, often with the pattern of adzing still visible. Most have some lashing holes spaced down each side. Some have various rebating or bevelling on the edges to fit into a framed aperture. A very limited number have a horizontal tunnel behind the raised body for a beam to be inserted as a locking device. These distinctive features are summarised in a comparative table listing all the recorded examples (Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of distinctive features of rua tahuhu entrances. Tick = present/yes; - = absent/no; ? = uncertain.

CARVING	LOCALITY	Lashings	Bevels/Rebates	Slot for beam	Male/Female	Perepere	Kopani	Height (cm)	Width (cm)
A	Putiki	?	?	-	?	✓	-	?	?
B	Kaweka	?	?	-	?	✓	?	?	?
C	Pipiriki	✓	?	-	?	-	✓	?	?
D/E	Putiki	✓	-	-	M	✓	-	118	55
F	Sth Taranaki(?)	✓	-	-	?	?	?	81	41
G	Waipuka	✓	✓	-	F	?	?	99	42.5
H	Putikituna	✓	-	-	F	?	?	76	41
I	Koriniti(?)	✓	-	-	?	?	-	122	48
J	Whanganui(?)	✓	✓	-	M	?	?	114	48
K	Waikato	✓	-	-	?	?	?	63	30
L	Whanganui(?)	✓	✓	-	?	✓	-	80	45
M	Okato	✓	✓	✓	F	✓	-	61	39
N	Taranaki(?)	✓	-	-	M	✓	-	66	20.2

Personal investigations in museums in New Zealand and worldwide, along with reference to David Simmons's records of his surveys of Maori artefacts in overseas museums (now held in Auckland Museum), have revealed the following examples of carved kopani or perepere:

**E. Entrance of rua tahuhu, from Putiki, Whanganui**

Fig. 6; Auckland Museum 52381

Nothing was recorded in museum files about the provenance of this carving but happily it has been recognised as the actual perepere on the rua tahuhu in the Putiki photograph preserved in the Haines album (Fig. 5). On the basis of this photograph, the carving is definitely older than the 1860s and could probably date back for another 20 years at least, that is to about the 1840s.

This carving is 118 cm high and 55 cm wide. It has a flat back, three lashing holes spaced down each side and no bevelling or rebating on the edges. The high relief figure and the panel itself are all carved from one solid piece of timber with the lower arms and legs cut free of the background. This figure is clearly male, with a small but erect penis and testicles in low relief on the base of the stomach. He has five fingers on each hand, pegs for paua shell eye inserts, and one tooth on each side of his mouth. His carved surface decoration consists of whakarare on head and body, pakura on lips and arms, rauponga spirals on corners of mouth, hands and thighs, and plain spirals on shoulders and elbows. On the background panel are unpierced takarangi spirals and manaia figures, with a small wheku face between the legs of the principal figure. A heavy coat of red paint applied in the past by the museum obscures the surface, but the carving was probably done with early metal tools.

**F. Entrance of rua tahuhu, from Whanganui district**

Fig. 7; Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford 1923.87.188

No definite locality of origin is recorded for this carving but it was formerly item number 45 in the collection of Charles Smith who lived in Whanganui from 1859 to 1900. It was collected by him, probably in the Whanganui area in the 1860s, and purchased by the Pitt Rivers Museum in 1923.

Measuring 81 cm high and 41 cm wide, this carving has three lashing holes down each side. There is no bevelling or rebating on the edges and no slots for pegs or bars to be inserted. Carved in high relief, probably with stone or early metal tools, the figure has a plain head and body with a rauponga spiral on its left shoulder and plain spirals on the other shoulder and both hips. Pakura patterns cover the arms, hands and legs, but some of this surface carving is unfinished on the figure's right side. On the left hand are four fingers but only three fingers on the right hand. Gender is not indicated. The ancestor name, Paikapoia, has been lightly inscribed down the body, probably at a later date than the original carving. Most indications are that this carving was probably produced sometime about the 1820s or 1830s.

Simmons (1985:93) described this carving as a pataka doorjamb. This can be questioned on the evidence assembled here, which clearly suggests that it served as a perepere or, less likely, as a kopani. On both stylistic grounds and possible locality of origin, he attributed it to either Ngati Ruanui or Nga Rauru tribal groups, which seems reasonable even if the grounds for this stylistic attribution are not made clear.



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Figs 6-9. Entrances of rua tahuu. 6. E, Putiki Pa, Whanganui. Auckland Museum 52381. Photo: Auckland Museum. 7. F, Whanganui district. Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford 1923.87.188. Photo: Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. 8. G, Waipuka, junction of Mangawhero and Whangaehu Rivers. Whanganui Regional Museum 1886.15. Photo: R. Neich. 9. H, Putikituna, Tangarakau River. Whanganui Regional Museum 1886.10. Photo: R. Neich.

### G. Entrance of rua tahuu, from Waipuka, Whangaehu River

Fig. 8; Whanganui Regional Museum 1886.15

Assumed to be part of the original S.H. Drew collection which was purchased in 1892 to form the Whanganui Public Museum, present museum files do not record the place or the date of collection of this carving. The Whanganui Museum Annual Report of 1899 confirms that it was in the museum collection by that date. In an unpublished address delivered to the Dunedin Science Congress of 1935, T.W. Downes (1935) indicated that this carving was “said to have been dug up at Waipuka, near where the Mangawhero joins the Wangaehu River”.

Waipuka seems to be an elusive locality, not shown by Rev Richard Taylor in his detailed 1843 census maps of the Mangawhero and Whangaehu River valleys (Ms 297/37, Rev. Richard Taylor Collection, Auckland Public Library). However, as Walton (1985) has documented, a considerable Maori population had previously lived in about 19 pa on higher ground along the lower valleys of these two rivers. None of these pa were still occupied from the 1840s onwards, but they had been replaced by several settlements on the richer soils of the narrow valley floors, containing about 100 people in total. Judging from the apparent age of this carving, it was probably associated with one of the pre-European sites in this area. These valleys are within the tribal territory of Ngati Apa (Smith 1910:map 1), although the inhabitants of the Mangawhero valley maintained close relationships with the people of the Whanganui River, even moving there to Parikino to avoid raiders from Taupo in 1845.

Measuring 99 cm high and 42.5 cm wide, this very old and weathered piece of stone-tooled carving has five lashing holes spaced down the figure’s true right side. Only one lashing hole remains on the other side but others were no doubt present in the lost portion of the carving. There are two old lashing holes on the lower area of the carving and one new large metal drill hole in the figure’s left foot. No obvious bevelling is apparent but the lower area across the feet has been reduced in thickness, perhaps to accommodate a sliding bar across the front or to fit behind another panel below. The back of the carving is flat and eroded. The figure represented is clearly female with a large vulva. She is carved in low relief with all of the body engaged in the slab leaving no recesses for slots or pegs. Her eyes are carved with large studs to hold paua shell inserts and the mouth has four teeth. Four fingers are carved on her left hand and three on her right. Surface decoration consists of plain spirals on lips and face, between the arms, above her hips and on each shoulder, rauponga on her body and legs, and rauponga spirals on her hips. Judging from the stone-tool work and the general appearance of this carving, it would seem to be one of the earlier examples of a rua tahuu entrance, dating perhaps from the early 1800s.

Downes and later Max Smart, both prominent Whanganui experts on Maori topics, were unsure what type of architectural member this carving was, opinions ranging from a tiki to a tekoteko (Files, Whanganui Regional Museum). Simmons (1985:34) described it as a doorway figure of a pataka, but in view of the evidence assembled here, its function as a perepere or kopani is much more likely.

Simmons also claimed that it represented a typical example of Whanganui River Te Ati Haunui-a-Paparangi tribal carving style. However, the documented locality of origin presented above indicates that this should be regarded as a Ngati Apa carving. There are certainly very close similarities with the style of the rua tahuu carvings from the Whanganui River as would be expected from the close relationships between these tribal groups, but the stylistic differences also need to be respected in any definition of tribal styles. This Ngati Apa carving therefore presents an opportunity to make a distinction between Whanganui and Ngati Apa

carving styles, an opportunity expressly noted as unavailable at the time by Mead (1986:64). Certainly, a comparison of this Waipuka carving with the other Whanganui rua tahuhu entrances presented here (E,I,J,L) does highlight some interesting differences (see below).

### **H. Entrance of rua tahuhu, from Putikituna, Tangarakau River**

Fig. 9; Whanganui Regional Museum 1886.10

Also assumed to be part of the original S.H. Drew collection, this carving was in the museum collection by 1899. T. W. Downes referred to it in his same 1935 presidential address as having been “found in a cave near Putiki-tuna, twelve miles up the Tangarakau - which is a tributary of the Whanganui River about ninety miles from its mouth”. On the side of the carving itself, an inscription in ink reads “Tuka Rangatai of Tangarakau 30-9-92”, recording the name of the Maori person who found it or passed it on to the European collector and the date when this transaction occurred. Putikituna can be reached by road, ten miles eastward from Whangamomona via Kohuratahi, and had a post office at the turn of the century. Downes (1923:38) described the Maori settlement of Putikituna as being the largest of several Maori settlements along the Tangarakau River. Today there is nothing left of the settlement, but a Putikituna Road and Stream running into the Tangarakau River appears on modern maps.

Measuring 76 cm high and 41 cm wide, this is a very solid carving almost certainly carved with stone tools. Most of it is still in sound condition but the face has been damaged and the figure’s true right side has been split away at some earlier period. However, it continued to be used after this piece was lost. From the rear, five lashing holes are seen spaced down both sides. From the front, four appear on the figure’s left side, while on the present right side three later lashing holes pass through the figure’s hand, leg and foot. The hole in the leg has a recessed groove cut for the lashing cord to run flush with the surface.

No bevelling or rebating appears on the edges of the slab. The back is flat and eroded but adze marks still show on the surface. The central figure is carved in deep high relief but no parts are disengaged from the background except for the looped tongue. The domed head with slight central ridge is thrust forward. Most of the head and body surface has been left plain but on the chest below the tongue, the eroded traces of a manaia hand or head perhaps with its body below, can be discerned. Pegs for paua shell inserts have been carved in the eyes. Both hands, but of disparate sizes, are represented in low relief on the body, with three fingers on the left hand and three fingers plus a spurred thumb on the right. Similarly, the feet are in low relief on the flat surface of the background slab, along with some matakupenga surface decoration. Surface decoration is restricted to rauponga over the eyes and around the lips, and on arms and legs, with rauponga spirals on the shoulders. An elongated plain spiral is carved on the remaining knee. The elbow is represented by a plain raised round disc. Although now much eroded, female gender is clearly indicated by a carved vulva. Most of the north Taranaki swamp-recovered carvings similar to this are generally considered to date from the later eighteenth or very early nineteenth centuries and this would also seem to be the most likely date for this piece.

In his presidential address, Downes (1935) wondered if this carving might have served as a sliding panel in some unspecified architectural construction but realised that the lashing holes probably ruled this out. In 1967, Max Smart was of the opinion that it “is more like a substantial cover for a pataka doorway or a food pit - rua” (Files, Wanganui Regional Museum). Simmons (1985:34, 35, 91) considered whether this carving might be a tekoteko but settled on calling it a doorway, doorslab, or door for a raised pataka, including it as a key



example in his discussion of the Taranaki form of raised pataka. On the evidence of the four illustrated rua tahuhu presented above, a function as part of the entrance to a semi-subterranean rua tahuhu seems much more likely, confirming Smart's opinion.

The tribal map in Smith (1910) would place Putikituna in Ngati Haua territory. Simmons (1985:34, 90) accepts this carving as coming from Ngati Haua territory, while pointing out its similarity to Te Ati Awa carvings from Manukorihi and even suggesting that "it was possibly carved by a carver from Te Ati Awa but in a Ngati Haua style". The Putikituna carving certainly displays close similarities to Te Ati Awa carvings, but if, as Simmons agrees, this is the only known early Ngati Haua carving, then it is premature to base such a supposition on the same solitary example.

### **I. Entrance of rua tahuhu, from lower Whanganui River**

Fig. 10; Museum of New Zealand, Wellington ME.1372

This carving is part of the John Handley collection, purchased by the museum on 25 May 1905. No locality of origin is recorded but written in pencil on the back of the carving, presumably by Handley, is the note "Parerua a Pamoana". This reference to Pamoana may indicate that Handley obtained the carving from Ngati Pamoana of Operiki and Koriniti, or if not from Koriniti itself at least from somewhere on the lower Whanganui River. The carving is very similar to the perepere of the rua tahuhu sketched by Crawford at Kaweka on the Whanganui River except that where the Handley carving has a small reversed figure carved at the top of the stomach, the Crawford sketch shows a profile manaia face. Many other pieces in John Handley's collection came from the Whanganui district. Therefore, the evidence of a lower Whanganui River origin for this carving seems fairly sound and is supported by the style of the carving.

Measuring 122 cm high and 48 cm wide, this large heavy totara carving probably dates from about the 1840s period. Two square-cut lashing holes are spaced down each side of the plain flat base panel with no bevelled or rebated edges nor any beam or pegging slots. The back is flat and roughly adzed with metal tools. Now missing one forearm, the wheku-faced figure stands out in 12 cm high relief from the flat slab, with its lower arms, legs and body actually disengaged from the supporting slab. Surface decoration is pakura on the head, very wide rauponga on eyes and mouth, plain spirals and pakura on the arms, rauponga spirals on the buttocks, and rauponga on the legs. Both ears have perforations for attaching feathers or other decorations. The boldly outcurved stomach terminates just below the tongue as a small upside-down wheku figure with its feet pointing toward the tongue (Fig. 11). No definite gender is indicated but the buttock spirals and bold stomach which could perhaps be read ambiguously as an erect penis suggest a male figure.

Handley's reference on the back of this carving to a "parerua" is an important independent confirmation of the function of this carving, perhaps even supplying the name by which such carvings were known on the Whanganui River. The "pare" or lintel of a rua is a very apt description of these carvings. In all respects, both stylistically and structurally, this carving is a very typical example of the standard Whanganui River rua tahuhu entrance, or perepere as termed in this article.

### **J. Entrance of rua tahuhu, from Whanganui district**

Fig. 12; Museum of New Zealand ME. 4551

Presented to the museum in May 1930 by Mrs W. Mantell, this carving was part of the

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Figs 10-13. Entrances of rua tahuu. 10. I, lower Whanganui River. Museum of New Zealand ME. 1372. 11. Detail of entrance I. 12. J, Whanganui River. Museum of New Zealand ME. 4551. 13. Detail of entrance J. Photos: R. Neich.

large collection assembled by her husband Walter Mantell, a prominent early settler in the Wellington and Otago areas and later a politician on the national scene. No locality of origin was recorded by Mantell for this carving and his collection was drawn from many parts of the country, including the Whanganui area. With wide interests in Maori studies, Mantell was presumably active as a collector from the time of his arrival in New Zealand in 1840 until sometime before his death in 1895. This long time span does not help pinpoint any possible date of collection for this carving.

Measuring 114 cm high and 48 cm wide, this is a large totara carving almost certainly cut with metal tools. Three lashing holes on the figure's right side and two or maybe three lashing holes on the left have been drilled with modern drills. The base board is flat and plain with a flat back and a very slight bevel down the front edges. There are no signs of any slotting beam arrangement. Carved in high relief about 16 cm deep, the figure is disengaged from the base board behind its lower arms, legs and body. Unlike all of the other rua tahuhu entrances with their stylised figures, this one has a naturalistic face with paua shell eyes and a small mouth. Where the two hands rest on the stomach, their fingers have been replaced by an upside-down wheku face in relief (Fig. 13). Prominent knobs mark the elbows and the ears are pierced for decoration. Otherwise all of the body is left plain with no surface decoration except for a lightly-incised large plain spiral on the figure's left buttock. As well as this indication of a male rape tattoo on the buttock, the outline of small male genitals with an erect penis is still to be seen, even though they have been shaved off almost flush with the surface of the lower stomach.

An early museum label attached to the front of the body calls it a tekoteko, but it is obviously another example of a rua tahuhu entrance. Without any external prompts as to the date of this carving, its age can only be estimated on the use of metal tools and its general appearance, suggesting probably sometime about the middle of the nineteenth century. Stylistically, the carving fits within the canons of a general Whanganui style.

### **K. Entrance of rua tahuhu, from near Te Awamutu**

Fig. 14; Wagener Museum, Houhora

Obtained by the Wagener Museum from a private collection, a note in the museum records states, "very old stone tool carving from swamp west of Te Awamutu". No other information is available but all the indications of stone adze markings and the archaic nature of the carving confirm that this is a very ancient example.

Measuring 63 cm high and 30 cm wide, which makes it smaller than most of the others, this flat panel has one large square-cut lashing hole at each corner. Also unlike all the other rua tahuhu carvings described here, this panel has simply a flat low relief carved face with no body features on the plain flat panel. Instead, facets left by a stone adze leave the surface with a dappled appearance. Carving of the stylised face is very rudimentary, with large ridged eyes and no surface decoration. No gender is indicated.

Simmons (1985:103) called it a kuwaha, that is, a doorway of a pataka. However, despite the differences noted above, the overall form and lashing arrangements on this carving agree with all the other rua tahuhu entrances described here.

Simmons (1985:103) has rightly pointed out the stylistic relationship of the head on this carving to the headform of the figure carved on the paepae of a pataka found in a swamp at Chartwell in the Waikato. He interprets this relationship to indicate a similarity in pataka construction between Waikato and Taranaki/Whanganui. However, in view of the argument presented here, the finding of this rua tahuhu entrance at Te Awamutu simply indicates that



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Figs 14-17. Entrances of rua tahuhu. 14. K, near Te Awamutu. Wagener Museum, Houhora. Photo: R. Neich. 15. L, no locality recorded. Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology Z 5102. Photo: Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. 16. M, Okato, Taranaki. Taranaki Museum A83.091. Photo: L. Tancred, Taranaki Museum. 17. Lashing holes in entrance M, viewed from the rear.

rua tahuhu of the same form as those of Whanganui/Taranaki were built at least occasionally, in the Te Awamutu area. This extension of the Taranaki rua tahuhu form into the Waikato is then seen to be in accord with the extension of the Taranaki and Hauraki sinuous type of carved figure into the Waikato as evidenced by the figures on the Chartwell paepae.

#### **L. Entrance of rua tahuhu, no locality recorded**

Fig. 15; Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology Z 5102

Measuring 80 cm high and 45 cm wide, this is obviously a very ancient carving, shaped with stone tools in pre-European times. Originally it had a large lashing hole at each corner but the lower true right corner has been broken away. A rebated edge extends completely across the lower portion of the panel, suggesting that it is intended to fit in behind a lower panel. This may indicate that the carving functioned as a perepere with a lower kopani resting in against its lower edge. However, the sharpness of the cut for this rebate might indicate that it is a later alteration, perhaps in order to fit the carving into a non-traditional structure. The rear side is flat and very weathered with a square hollow roughly cut into the lower central area. The frontal figure stands out in low relief, with no parts disengaged from the flat background and no provision for a slotted beam or pegs. Surface decoration is now very worn but was also minimal originally, being restricted to broad flat crossed lines on the tongue and large square-cut pakati notches on the shoulders. Both hands originally rested on the chest. The lower portion of the stomach has been lost, thereby removing any definite indication of gender.

In stylistic terms, a Whanganui area style seems to be a reasonable attribution for this carving, as suggested by Simmons (1985:96) although it also shares some features of Ngati Apa style as exemplified by the rua tahuhu entrance from Waipuka (G).

#### **M. Entrance of rua tahuhu, from Okato, Taranaki**

Fig. 16; Taranaki Museum A83.091, (Z3287)

As described by Day (1982; 1983:137), this carving was found by Mr Keith Mundell in April 1982 while digging a drain along the edge of a swamp (Grid reference N108/417751 2nd edition) on Mrs A. Campbell's farm, Komene Road, Okato. This swamp is associated with the Pukehoe pa complex and other artefacts such as stone and wooden pounders, a pumice pigment pot, a weaving peg, a kumete and other wooden items have been recovered from the same area.

Measuring 61 cm high and 39 cm wide, the carving has a maximum depth of 13.5 cm. All carved from one solid piece of timber, the background slab has been cut down to 2.5 cm thick, and tapers in width from 39 cm across the bottom edge to 35 cm across the top. The true right edge of the panel has been broken away so that no lashing holes remain except for the broken edge of a lashing hole in the lower corner. On the true left side there are four lashing holes spaced at intervals of 10 cm, 20.5 cm and 27 cm apart. However, from the rear another lashing hole appears on this edge at about one third down from the top, its exit on the front obscured by a tightly-packed remnant of fibre lashing. In addition to these lashing holes along the sides, there is another on the top edge to the true right of the figures's head, and another in the centre of the lower edge between the figure's feet (Fig. 17). All of these lashing holes were originally cut more or less square rather than drilled, but subsequent wear has rounded them off into a semicircular section. The rear of the panel has been adzed flat and smoothed off over very straight-grained timber. None of the edges on the rear are rebated or bevelled. On the front, the top of the background panel has been bevelled off, while cutting across the

lower legs of the figure, a 1.5 cm wide rebated recess runs right across the lower edge of the panel. About halfway down the panel, a 2 cm wide slot for a horizontal crossbar cuts across the lower arms of the figure and runs as a tunnel behind the raised body of the figure (Fig. 18).

In overall form, size and constructional features, this carving from Okato fits well within the range of rua tahuhu entrances already described above, contrary to its description by Day (1982; 1983:137) and Simmons (1985:35) as part of the entrance to a raised pataka storehouse. Most notably, the Okato carving shares the lashing holes of all other rua tahuhu entrances and the rebated recess across the front lower edge as seen in entrances G from Waipuka and L in the Cambridge University Museum. The Okato carving differs from these in the greater number of lashing holes including some across the top and bottom edges, and particularly with its transverse slot for a beam running behind the body, all elaborate and deliberate provisions for holding the carving in place. These features all appear to be integral elements of the

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Figs 18-19. Entrances of rua tahuhu. 18. Side view of entrance M. Taranaki Museum A83.091. Photo: R. Neich. 19. N, no locality recorded. British Museum 1630. Photo: British Museum.



original construction and not later additions which might have suggested a later different reuse. The rebated recess across the lower front edge of entrances G, L, and now M, has been interpreted as possible evidence of their function as perepere with a lower kopani butting against the recess. However, this rebate could just as easily serve as the lower edge of a kopani fitting in behind a lower sill of an entrance. The slotted beam arrangement might also indicate a function as a kopani where quicker removal and refitting was a requirement but the presence of so many lashing holes would still make frequent opening a major task. On the basis of these arguments, it would therefore seem most likely that the Okato carving served as a perepere of a rua tahuhu, perhaps with the unusual provision of a slotted beam to hold it even more tightly in place.

Standing out in high relief against a flat background, only the area of the stomach where the slotted tunnel passes through is actually disengaged from the slab. Only the rounded peak top of the head of the figure projects up above the line of the base slab, unlike virtually all of the other carvings described here in which almost all of the head projects above the panel. The eyes with sockets for paua shell inserts are deepset below large semicircular brows, and the ears are shown as round plugs. Four semicircular teeth surround a wide ridged tongue. Large three-fingered hands rest on each thigh which are splayed to prominently display a large vulva, clearly denoting this figure as female. No surface decoration appears on the neck or body but there is ritorito on the upper eyebrows and around the mouth. The surface decoration on the arms was probably pakura with a spiral at each shoulder and the fingers bear ritorito. On the upper legs, haehae extend from a spiral at each hip. Elbows and knees are each marked by a plain raised disc. Both feet have three large toes which are webbed in outline. Most of the surface of the background slab is left plain except for low relief matakupenga and double spirals on both sides above the arms of the figure.

As both Simmons (1985:89) and Day (1982:84) have noted, this carving was found within the Taranaki tribal territory. Pukehoe was a major pa of the Nga Mahanga hapu of Taranaki iwi in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was from this pa that Tamarerehau planned the successful defence of nearby Ngaweka pa from a Waikato taua in 1820. By 1860, his son Komene was the major chief in the pa. The impressive stone sculpture, Hine-o-Tanga was also originally on this pa, indicating some measure of the importance of this pa on the Taranaki coast (K. Day, pers. comm. 18 March 1996). The Taranaki tribal carving style is distinctive within a wider Taranaki regional carving style, particularly on the basis of differences between Taranaki and Te Ati Awa tribal styles (Day 1983:184-185). Te Ati Awa figures have very pointed foreheads and long narrow serpentine bodies with a marked central ridge or broad serpentine bodies. Taranaki tribal figure carvings on the other hand have only a slightly pointed forehead or no forehead at all, and bulbous or rounded bodies which still retain some serpentine characteristics. However, Simmons has suggested that this particular carving may have been a gift from Te Ati Awa, mainly on the presence of its peaked forehead, a Te Ati Awa stylistic feature also noted on this carving by Day (1983:185).

#### **N. Entrance of rua tahuhu, no locality recorded**

Fig. 19; British Museum 1630

Collected in New Zealand at an unrecorded locality and date by Captain E. Stanley of the Royal Navy, this carving then came into the collection of the Royal United Service Museum, Whitehall. Since this collection was dispersed in 1863, this carving must have been collected sometime in the first half of the nineteenth century. It later came to the British Museum as part of the Christie collection.

Measuring 66 cm high and 20.2 cm wide at the base, this carving has two squared lashing holes on the figure's true left side, and one lashing hole and the remnants of another on the figure's right side. The back is flat and there is no bevelling or rebating on the edges. Its strikingly naturalistic head is tilted slightly to one side and projects completely free from the very reduced background slab behind the body. The face with closed slit eyes bears a complete male tattoo. Bulging male genitals are carved between the buttocks which are turned outwards so that his legs pass up and over his arms, ending in wedge-shaped feet without toes. Both hands have four fingers and a reduced thumb. Arms and body are left plain except for his navel, as is the background surface. Only his buttocks and upper legs have surface decoration, of rauponga and rauponga spirals.

This carving is considerably narrower in width than any of the others, perhaps suggesting that it may have been a non-functional replica or model. This would also be consistent with its fresh surface showing a lack of the effects of weathering. Simmons (1985:89) referred to this lack of weathering as possible evidence for its function as a figure over the door of a raised storehouse where it would have been protected by the porch roof. However, apart from its reduced size, in all respects of form and attachment provision, this carving fits within the range of rua tahuu entrances described above. If the arrangement of the front panels of the Kaweka rua tahuu entrance (B) is taken into account, the width of the actual carving does not necessarily always reflect the width of the doorway below it. With this leeway, the narrowness of the British Museum carving does not necessarily preclude its function in a full-size rua tahuu. Given the extreme projection of its head and its high narrow proportions, any function as a kopani appears to be impossible, again supporting the interpretation of these carvings as perepere, or their equivalent local term.

In stylistic terms, this carving is very unusual among this assemblage with its naturalistic human figure. However, the interlocked arms and legs betray a Taranaki origin or influence, as do the wide diamond-shaped pakati notches in the rauponga surface decoration. Simmons (1985:89) interpreted this carving as a double figure, with parts of a male and female in the act of copulation, with the buttocks belonging to the female. However, this seems to be unlikely in view of the male buttock tattoo or rape represented by the rauponga spirals. While it is difficult to be certain, this carving may have been executed with early metal tools.

### CONSTRUCTIONAL POSSIBILITIES

This study has demonstrated that there are many problems with the suggestion that these carvings were fitted as figures above the door in the back wall of the porch in a raised pataka storehouse. With their prominent heads projecting above the background panel, it is difficult to conceive how these carvings could be fitted into the structure of the back wall. In all of them, the rear of the projecting head is a flat extension of the same flat plane of the rear of the main slab. This means that the head could not have been projected forward in front of the wall. It may be more likely that they served as doorway covers in a pataka, but again with the head in the same plane as the main slab, how would they fit into the door space?

Adding further weight to the argument against their use in pataka, no early textual or illustrative evidence has ever been located to show these types of entranceway carvings in the porch of a raised pataka. Admittedly, the early visual evidence of any raised pataka storehouses in the Taranaki/Whanganui region is very meagre, making any argument based on it rather tenuous.

The only known illustration of a Taranaki pataka is the famous watercolour by Charles Heaphy showing the elaborately-carved pataka at Otumatua Pa in 1840 (Barrow 1969:Fig.157).



Surely, if the doorway of this pataka had been carved as strikingly as the maihi and paepae, a draughtsman as thorough as Heaphy would have included some indication of it. Instead, the doorway of this pataka is shown as a plain rectangular shape against a plain porch back wall.

Indeed, much of the early visual evidence of Whanganui district pataka also suggests that they often had plain doors and doorways. The raised pataka in Gilfillan's sketch at Putiki (Fig. 2) has a totally plain entrance, as does the derivative pataka in his 1847 watercolour of Putiki. In a sketch by Charles Heaphy showing "Monuments in a tapued Pah, Wanganui River", the pataka is clearly shown with a plain doorway (Chapman 1870:86). Crawford's sketch of the tangi that he witnessed between Topia Turoa and the old woman that they met at Ranana on the Whanganui River on 24 December 1861 includes a pataka in the scene, again clearly with a very plain doorway (J.C. Crawford sketchbook E41/p.49, Negative 147472 1/2, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington). This preponderance of plain pataka doorways in the visual record of Whanganui pataka is reflected in the paucity, or perhaps even total absence, of carved pataka doorways from the Whanganui district in museum collections.

Obviously, many questions still remain regarding the finer points of exactly how these entrance carvings fitted into the overall construction of a semi-subterranean storehouse, but the general technical features are clear. All of them have at least two lashing holes down the side and occasionally one at the lower edge, a structural arrangement that suggests a relatively permanent fitting. On the evidence of the early field illustrations, examples A, B and D/E are definitely functioning as perepere. Example C at Pipiriki is considered to be a possible kopani only on the evidence of Crawford's sketch which is amateurish with inconsistent perspective, perhaps giving a misleading impression of the possible height of a doorway below the carved perepere and extending below the surrounding ground level. The evidence of rebates and bevelling along certain edges of these carvings is inconclusive, as this provision would have functioned in various possible constructional relationships. A comparison of their sizes (Fig. 20) shows a fairly smooth even spread with a very narrow range of widths except for the aberrant N and K carvings, suggesting that they all fall within the one class of object.

While the above evidence is not totally conclusive, I would maintain that all of these carvings are most probably designed to serve as perepere, probably with a plain door fitted below, either on lashings, pegs, or later on hinges. This door is then easily removable to retrieve kumara from the store at frequent intervals.

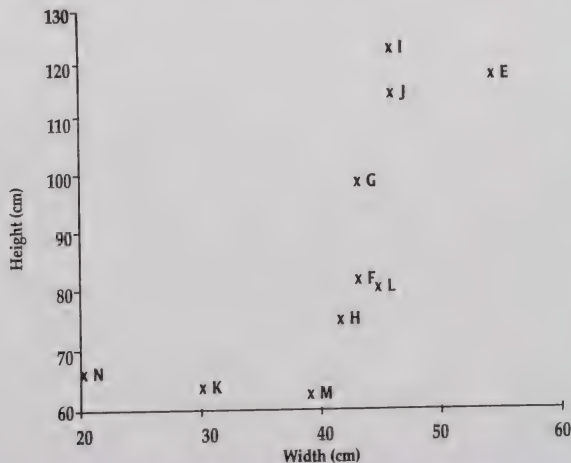



Fig. 20. Comparison of sizes of rua tahuu entrances.



Another type of storehouse carving from other areas of New Zealand should be mentioned here, to avoid confusion with rua tahuhu entrances. Only two examples of this other type have been located, one in the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle, at Rouen, France (Fig. 21) and another in the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow (Fig. 22). While superficially similar to rua tahuhu entrance carvings, these two are different in many significant features. In both, the head of the figure which is male, is thrust forward to leave a considerable space between the rear of the head and the plane of the rear of the main slab. This would allow the upper rim of the main slab to be inserted into a doorway space, leaving the head to project upwards in front of the wall above the door. Neither of these two have any lashing holes down the sides, but both have a slotted space on each side behind the body where a peg could be inserted to hold the slab in place. The Glasgow carving is in Arawa style and is associated with other carvings of a raised pataka, including its kuwaha, presented to the museum by a William Clark in 1864. The Rouen carving is unlocalised but has an East Coast Ngati Porou aspect. Although rarely documented or collected, both of these carvings appear to be the door cover for a raised pataka storehouse. Such a carving is indicated in place, again from the East Coast, in the Rev. Richard Taylor's 1839 sketch of a pataka at Poverty Bay (Simmons 1985:31). Therefore these two carvings in Glasgow and Rouen seem to represent another class of Maori artefact, similar in form and perhaps symbolism but geographically and architecturally distinct from the class of rua tahuhu entrances described here.



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Figs 21-22. Doors of raised pataka, no localities recorded. 21. Musée d'Histoire Naturelle, Rouen 85. Photo: D.R. Simmons. 22. Hunterian Museum, Glasgow E333/1. Photo: Hunterian Museum.

## TRIBAL STYLES OF RUA TAHUHU ENTRANCES

While all belonging to a single discrete class of Maori artefact, these rua tahuhu entrances represent an impressive range of tribal carving styles. Admittedly, the reliability of these tribal style attributions vary widely from those with a documented locality to those which have only been assigned to a tribal style on comparative grounds. Nevertheless, the reasoning for these stylistic attributions has been discussed for each example.

Most numerous are those in the style of the Whanganui River or Te Ati Haunui a Paparangi tribes (E,I,J,L), followed by one each from southern Taranaki Ngati Ruanui/Nga Rauru (F), Ngati Apa (G), Ngati Haua (H), Waikato (K), Taranaki tribe (M), and general Taranaki region (N). In general terms, these are all basically contiguous tribal areas in the western region of the North Island, thereby defining a regional range for this type of rua tahuhu entrance.

To the north, the regional type extends into the Waikato (K), as might be expected by the documented extension of Taranaki serpentine figure types into this area. Inland from North Taranaki, the Putikituna carving (H) is especially important as the sole definite example of a Ngati Haua tribal carving style. At the same time, the Putikituna carving also documents the extreme eastern extension of a basic north Taranaki carving style, fundamentally different from the squared frontal Whanganui carving styles which are encountered just downstream along the Tangarakau River to its junction with the Whanganui River.

To the south, the presence of a Ngati Apa carving (G), alongside several Whanganui and one possible south Taranaki representative (F), all of the same class of artefact, provides a valuable opportunity for improving the definition of tribal carving styles in this contentious area. Ford (1979:437) and Day (1983:183) have both questioned the possibility of defining a south Taranaki Ngati Ruanui/Nga Rauru carving style in the absence of actual localised carvings from this area. However, this absence did not deter Simmons (1985:92-93) from establishing a south Taranaki carving style within which he included the rua tahuhu entrance (F). Then, on even shakier grounds and without realising the Ngati Apa origin of rua tahuhu entrance (G), Simmons (1985:92, 94) suggested that a Ngati Apa carving style might be closely related to his south Taranaki style. For future stylistic studies, these carvings are key markers for a comparative study of related tribal carving styles extending from south Taranaki through the lower Whanganui area to the Rangitikei district.

With its wide geographical and stylistic range, this regional type of rua tahuhu entrance extends across both sides of the major divide between the northern/western sinuous styles and the eastern/central square styles. There is often a time differential between these groups of carving styles, as evidenced by a concentration of earlier stone-tooled carvings in the northern/western styles and later metal-tooled carvings in the eastern central styles. This same time differential is apparent in the present assemblage of rua tahuhu entrances, with entrances F, H, K and M from the Taranaki area executed by stone tools and E, I and J from the Whanganui area executed by metal tools. Only G and L from the greater Whanganui area are carved by stone tools, thereby indicating the presence of this type of rua tahuhu entrance in the Whanganui area in pre-European times. As expected from the history of other types of architectural carvings, the northern/western rua tahuhu apparently was not translated into metal tool work, except perhaps for the early metal example of N. On the other hand, the central/eastern styles represented here by the Whanganui area rua tahuhu entrances made a successful transition into the metal tool era.

Another line of investigation might examine the regional distribution of the archaeological evidence for different types of storehouses. As Day has commented (pers. comm. 18



March 1996) the occurrence of rua tahuhu type pits on Taranaki iwi pa sites is rare, the main type being the bell-shaped rua. However, rua tahuhu type structures are common in Ngati Ruanui and Nga Rauru territories.

## SYMBOLISM

Of the 13 carvings in this series, three are definitely intended to be male, another three are definitely female, and the other seven are indeterminate. Of the 13, only two are naturalistic figures and both of these are clearly male. The other 11 figures are stylised, either as wheku figures which are all from the Whanganui area or shown with rounded brow ridges which are concentrated in the northern Taranaki area but are also scattered right across the regional spread of this class of artefact. Throughout all of these figures, despite their wide stylistic range, there is a remarkable consistency of figural composition and stance. As a composition, there is always one main central figure with very limited development of subsidiary figures or surface decoration on the background slab. Only three Whanganui figures (B,I,J) have a subsidiary figure on the body of the main figure, upside down in two cases and manaia in the Kaweka drawing. In terms of stance, all of these figures stand full frontal, mostly with both hands placed symmetrically on the body, except for one case of a hand to the mouth (E) and another (M) with both hands on hips.

Only one (F) has an ancestor identification inscribed on it and that is probably a later addition. However, the range of male and female figures indicates that several different particular individuals, presumably ancestors, are represented by each of these carvings. Their frontal stance with protruding tongue suggests a defiant or guardian attitude, perhaps with some connotation of fertility suggested by the genitalia depicted on almost half of them.

By treating these carvings as the doorways of pataka, Simmons (1985:34, 35) has interpreted their symbolism within the parameters of his symbolic scheme for pataka. Hence, while acknowledging the difficulty of interpretation in these three cases, he sees carvings G, H and M which are all clearly female as depicting creation in terms of the parentless birth of Rangi and Papa in the void of Te Kore. Whether the presence of male figures on this same class of artefact renders this interpretation doubtful is a moot point. Quite possibly, there are different symbolisms intended on different examples of this same artefact class.

Nevertheless, despite some scepticism invited by the bold sweep of this particular interpretation by Simmons, his suggestion does raise the important question as to whether the symbolism of these rua tahuhu entrances is the same as the symbolism understood for the entrances to raised pataka storehouses. Gilfillan's field sketch (Fig. 2) along with much other general evidence shows that raised pataka storehouses and semi-subterranean storehouses often stood side by side in a village context, obviously serving quite different functions. Semi-subterranean storehouses were designed specifically for the seasonal storage of the kumara crop while pataka provided storage for a wide range of items including preserved foods, implements, fishing and hunting equipment, weapons and valuables.

As recorded by the Rev. Thomas Kendall and elucidated by Binney (1968; 1980; 1986), the large carved frontal figure over the doorway of a raised pataka drawn by Kendall represented the deified creator-ancestor Nukutawhiti in the first primal state of undistinguished matter, presiding over the threshold passage between two states of existence, from life before creation to life in this world. Other kuwaha figures on pataka in museum collections are known to represent creator-ancestors of similar status to Nukutawhiti such as Tamatekapua and Kahungunu. In fact, most pataka kuwaha figures are male, a few are of indeterminate gender and some feature a male and female in copulation. Very few pataka kuwaha figures



are female, one rare example being the female holding an infant on the *kuwaha* of *Wi Tako Ngatata's pataka*, *Nukutewhatewha*, now in the Dowse Art Museum in Lower Hutt. Another female is the central figure over the doorway of the *Te Kaha pataka*, now in Auckland Museum. Kendall described the smaller figures on each side of *Nukutawhiti* as "the dual rib" or the two creative principles of knowledge and life. The figure below *Nukutawhiti* is his son, while the two figures on either side of the doorway are the keepers or guardians of the door to the underworld. In Kendall's scheme of interpretation, the number of fingers and the placement of the hands is significant. The absence of three middle fingers on *Nukutawhiti's* hands signifies that he is a deity in the first state, while the three fingers on the hands of his son and the guardian figures indicate that they are beings who have achieved existence and form.

In almost all respects, the figurative composition on the *rua tahuhu* entrances described here stands in contrast to the composition on *pataka kuwaha*. On the *rua tahuhu* entrances, female figures occur in equal numbers to males, and there are no supplementary figures comparable to the dual ribs and the guardians of the *pataka kuwaha*. With their numbers of fingers ranging from three to five, with the *Putikituna* figure (H) displaying asymmetrical-sized hands, and with several (F,G,H) having different numbers of fingers on each hand, there is obviously a variety of messages being conveyed by these distinctions. Although only one figure is named, it seems a reasonable inference that the *rua tahuhu* figures represent various local tribal ancestors of more recent descent than the remote primal deified creator-ancestors of *pataka kuwaha*.

On the basis of different functions and different types of figures represented, a difference in symbolism between the carved entrance-ways of these two distinct types of storehouses, *pataka* and *rua tahuhu*, is to be expected, conveying different sets of values and meanings for the community that owned them. Furthermore, as Day and Simmons have suggested, the use of carved entrances on *rua tahuhu* might have been restricted to those belonging to an important individual or to mark especially important and *tapu* stores, such as those in which the seed *kumara* were stored before being planted out in special gardens set aside by the *tohunga* (Best 1925:58). An important ancestor guarding the door of such *rua kumara* would have marked them as especially *tapu*.

#### REGIONAL TYPES OF SEMI-SUBTERRANEAN STOREHOUSE ENTRANCES

Although originating from several different tribal areas, the series of *rua tahuhu* entrances described above clearly represent one major regional type of entrance construction for a semi-subterranean storehouse. This can be called the western or Whanganui/Taranaki regional type.

Another regional type would be exemplified by the East Coast *rua tahuhu* entrance described by *Tuta Nihoniho* of *Ngati Porou*, quoted above. This type is seen in a photograph of a semi-subterranean storehouse with a carved face on its *perepere* from *Te Horo* near East Cape (Fig. 23). The plain door or *kopani* of this store can be seen leaning in the entrance, fortuitously indicating the depth of the interior excavated floor, approximately 60 cm below the level of the surrounding ground. Several *perepere* carved with faces like this, usually in *Ngati Porou* style, are preserved in museum collections. Very similar underground storehouses but with plain *perepere*, are illustrated by Hamilton (1896:99) at *Waiomatatini*, by Best (1925:118a) at *Waiapu*, and by Trotter and McCulloch (1989:56) at *Waipiro Bay*. The *Waiomatatini* storehouse has vertical timber panels forming the front, reminiscent of the fronts on the Whanganui storehouses (A,B,C and D) but without the lashings. In the *Waipiro*

For cultural reasons, these images have been removed.  
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Fig. 23. Semi-subterranean foodstore at Te Horo, near East Cape. Photo: Museum of New Zealand B.1052.

Bay photograph, Mokena Pahoe poses with his baskets of kumara, ready to be neatly stacked in the storehouse. These entrances illustrated from Te Horo, Waiomatatini and Waipiro Bay can be grouped as examples of the East Coast regional type. Similar storehouse entrances were also in use in the Tuhoe tribal area, judging from the remaining heavy storehouse lintel timbers with single frontal face in Tuhoe style found in museum collections, corresponding with the Te Horo example figured above.

A third regional type of semi-subterranean foodstore entrance is represented by the doorframes and door collected by Waite and Sparke from Omarumutu, near Opotiki in 1908 (Fig. 24), now preserved in Canterbury Museum (registration number E 108.38). Without knowing exactly what type of semi-subterranean storehouse this door came from, enough of the structure is present to show how the flat door panel with a high relief frontal figure was held in place by a horizontal beam passing through a slot in a raised flange on each door frame. This can be called the Eastern Bay of Plenty type of rua entrance. An ancient storehouse door, 74.5 cm high by 48 cm wide, in Auckland Museum (50973) which may have come from Foxton in Horowhenua (Fig.25) is possibly another example of this same type of door, although the tongue at the top edge indicates a slightly different form of insertion. A tunnel behind the body of the raised relief figure is designed to take a horizontal beam holding the door in place, comparable to the horizontal beam that must have passed across the Omarumutu door and through the flanges on each door jamb.

For cultural reasons, these images have been removed.  
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Figs 24-25. Doors of kumara storage pits. 24. Omarumutu, Opotiki. Canterbury Museum E 108.38. Photo: Canterbury Museum 14805. 25. Possibly from Foxton, Horowhenua. Auckland Museum 50973. Photo: Auckland Museum.

Several correspondences in structure can be seen between the Eastern Bay of Plenty rua entrance and the door jambs of semi-subterranean kumara storehouses from North Auckland. Several of these, including two or possibly three matching pairs, have been recovered from swamps in the north. The two definite matching pairs are from a swamp at Takahue near Kaitaia, in Te Rarawa tribal territory. Now in Auckland Museum, one of these pairs is registered as 37398 and 37399, the other pair as 37396.1 and 37396.2 (Archey 1977:49). A single door jamb from Tautoro near Kaikohe, Auckland Museum number 45506, is probably a Ngapuhi carving (Simmons 1985:67). Another single door jamb from somewhere near Auckland, Whanganui Museum 51.751, is probably a Ngati Whatua carving (Archey 1977:49; Simmons 1985:69). Yet another single door jamb figure in Ngati Whatua or perhaps Ngati Wai style from which the surrounding panel has been cut away is in the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle at La Rochelle, France, registration number H1702 (Simmons 1985:37). Finally in this series is the single door jamb from Peria in Ngati Kahu or Te Rarawa tribal territory, now Auckland Museum 37397, which has only a vestigial figure indicated as a curved raised ridge on the flat panel, suggesting that the raised flanges on the Omarumutu door jambs may also be vestigial figures. Apart from the Peria door jamb, all of these other North Auckland jambs have a single figure on each, either male or female, carved in the local North



Auckland serpentine figure style. In all of these including the Peria jamb, a slotted recess to accept a horizontal beam or peg is cut, usually into the genital area of each figure, suggesting a symbolism of sexual union as the linking beam across the door was inserted into the slot.

Considerably larger than all of these others, at 245 cm and 237 cm high, the third possible pair of semi-subterranean storehouse door jambs are the two carvings from a swamp at Otakanini on the Kaipara Harbour, Auckland Museum 6206 and 6394 (Archev 1977:49; Simmons 1985: 54). Instead of the single figure of all the other jambs, each of these panels bears two figures carved in serpentine North Auckland style. Some doubt may be raised as to whether they form a matching pair when one considers their different heights, their different fittings at the top, their different styles and periods of carving, and the lack of correspondence between their figures's sizes and placement. However, these Otakanini carvings share most of the same features of lashing holes, slotted recesses into the body for horizontal beams or pegs, and wedge-shaped cut-outs at the top present in the other jambs, indicating fairly convincingly that they all belong to the same class of artefact. Traditionally, they are said to have been carved by Kawerau and Ngati Whatua tribal carvers for a house named Tutangimamae. While most of the traditional evidence and the published literature dealing with these Otakanini carvings has implied that they belonged to some unspecified type of large dwelling or meeting house, their inclusion here suggests that they should be considered as the door jambs for an extremely large semi-subterranean kumara storehouse, a point partially recognized by Archev (1977:49) and Mead (1986:36) who described them as pataka carvings.

By extrapolating from the structural attachment of the lintel beam above the Omarumutu doorway, some understanding can be gained of the function of the wedge-shaped cut-outs at the top of many of the North Auckland semi-subterranean storehouse door jambs. They are apparently designed to fit against matching protuberances on a flattish lintel across the top of the doorway. No trace has survived of one of these lintel beams in the north, nor has a northern rua door panel ever been identified, perhaps indicating that both of these elements were usually left plain and uncarved.

Although associated with several different tribal groups on stylistic grounds, all of these northern door jambs can be grouped together under the North Auckland type of semi-subterranean storehouse entrance, comprising the fourth regional type of storehouse entrance structure identified in this study.

## CONCLUSION

The identification of this series of carvings as the entrances to semi-subterranean storehouses has clarified much that was previously obscure in the architectural construction of these storehouses. The analysis of their localities of origin and their tribal carving styles has provided further evidence for an understanding of stylistic relationships, especially needed in the south Taranaki to Rangitikei area. On this basis, a new regional type of artefact and four regional types of semi-subterranean storehouse have been defined.

Much analysis still remains to be done on all of these types of semi-subterranean storehouse entrance carvings, especially a full architectural analysis and comparison of the structural features. A fuller study of the regional extent of each of these regional types of semi-subterranean storehouse entrances, as evidenced by the regional distribution of their archaeological traces, might prove useful. Hopefully, this study has assembled and sorted out the basic evidence, perhaps pointing out the directions that further research might take. There is obviously still much to be learnt about the symbolism of these carvings and their stylistic analysis needs to be integrated into the wider regional context.

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R. NEICH, Auckland Institute and Museum, Private Bag 92018, Auckland, New Zealand.